DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 420 119 EA 029 105

TITLE	Turning Around Low-Performing Schools: A Guide for State and Local Leaders. [Summary].
INSTITUTION	Department of Education, Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	1998-05-00
NOTE	17p.; For the full guide, "summarized here" see ED 419 301.
PUB TYPE	Guides - Non-Classroom (055)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Administrator Guides; Elementary Secondary Education; *Instructional Improvement; *Intervention; *Leaders Guides; *School Effectiveness; School Role
IDENTIFIERS	Low Performing Schools

ABSTRACT

This guide advocates making strategic decisions about instructional practices and focusing all school staff on aligning every aspect of school operations--from professional development to parent and community involvement--in order to support and sustain student achievement. The guide discusses how to set high standards for performance and presents some strategies for improving student learning. Some of these strategies include helping schools gain control of the learning environment, concentrating resources and efforts on providing students with challenging curriculum, and providing services so that young children come to school ready to learn. Meaningful improvement involves systemic support for the process of change, and suggestions for nurturing this support are given. Schools must have strong leadership and policies that encourage teachers' commitment to reform use resources strategically. This guide also presents aid from the U.S. Department of Education available to chronically low-performing schools. A checklist for improvement and suggestions for school leaders to improve their schools are offered. (RJM)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 420 119

Turning Around Low-Performing Schools

A Guide for State and Local Leaders

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

U.S. Department of Education

EA 029 105

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

THE SECRETARY

May 1998

Dear Superintendent:

I am pleased to respond to the President's directive with a guide for state and local policymakers confronting the challenge of chronically low-performing schools. This guide speaks to leaders who want to turn around low-performing schools by making fundamental changes that create a safe, orderly environment that focuses on high standards of teaching and learning for all students.

There is little doubt that some of our schools are failing to provide the kind of educational experience we want for our children. In too many schools, expectations of students are low, teachers and parents are frustrated, and academic performance is poor. Particularly in our nation's highest-poverty urban schools, where two-thirds of the students fail to meet even minimum standards of achievement, the need for change is urgent.

We know that in countless communities, low-performing schools can and are being turned around. Our task is to make *every* public school a quality environment that focuses on teaching and learning. If we do not make that effort, we are sending a devastating message to children about our commitment to their well-being and to the nation's future.

This guide highlights how state, district, and community leaders can help schools focus on high standards of teaching and learning, build commitment for fundamental improvements in low-performing schools, and implement strategies to raise student achievement. The guide also examines approaches that many states and districts are using to intervene in persistently low-performing schools. From Kentucky to Texas and Boston to San Francisco, public leaders are raising their expectations for students and schools, supporting systemwide reforms that work, and demanding school and student accountability for performance. Across the nation, there are examples of schools that, with a bold set of strategies, are changing what happens between teachers and students in the classroom, focusing on learning, and improving student achievement. Turning around low-performing schools is hard work, but it is the responsibility of each and every community in America.

There is no one place to lay the blame for low-performing schools. Many problems — poverty, limited resources, family stress, poor teacher training, unsafe learning environments, and other factors — contribute to frustration on the part of teachers, disillusionment on the part of communities, and discouragingly low levels of student achievement. While these problems are serious and highlight the complexity of the challenges facing schools, they cannot thwart our efforts to improve our schools. A superintendent's and school district's leadership is critical in addressing these challenges.

In addition to investments in current federal education programs, such as Title I, Goals 2000, and the new Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Program, the President has proposed a set

600 INDEPENDENCE AVE., S.W. WASHINGTON, D.C. 20202-0100

Our mission is to ensure equal access to education and to promote educational excellence throughout the Nation.

of initiatives to provide you with additional resources and opportunities to assist your efforts to improve the quality of your schools, including:

- Class size reduction to a national average of 18 students per class in the early grades;
- The School Construction Initiative to help modernize school buildings through interest-free bonds to support a high-quality teaching and learning environment and to alleviate classroom overcrowding;
- Educational Opportunity Zones to help high-poverty urban and rural districts implement some of the kinds of policies highlighted in this guide that support school accountability and improvements in student performance;
- 21st Century Community Learning Centers to fund school-community partnerships to build or expand after-school, extended learning programs for school-age children; and
- The America Reads Challenge, an initiative that encourages school and community partnerships to provide quality reading instruction through linking in-school and out-of-school reading programs.

We encourage you to share this guide with your school communities. For a copy of the full guide, please call the Department of Education at 1-800-USA-LEARN.

Our society is only as strong as the education of our people. Let us raise our expectations of our schools. Let us dedicate ourselves to ensuring that all schools provide children with the skills they need to be successful and productive citizens. Let us work together to turn around low-performing schools.

Yours sincerely,

Dick Riley

Richard W. Riley

"I challenge every school district to adopt high standards, to abolish social promotion, to move aggressively to help all students make the grade through tutoring and summer schools, and to hold schools accountable for results, giving them the tools and the leadership and the parental involvement to do the job."

—President Clinton, October 1997

"We cannot and must not tolerate failing schools. We need to stop making excuses and get on with the business of fixing our schools. We have the unique opportunity to do what is best for our children. This should be our great patriotic cause—our national mission: Giving all of our children a world-class education by putting standards of excellence into action."

—Secretary of Education Richard Riley, February 1997

"We must encourage and help more cities and states to take up the challenge of turning around low-performing schools and helping the students they serve get back on the path to achievement. We can do this by making widely available information on what works and what doesn't, and by ensuring that Department of Education resources are most productively used for these purposes. In order to accomplish this, I am directing the Department of Education to take the following actions: 1) produce and disseminate guidelines on effective approaches to turning around low-performing schools, and 2) help cities and states use existing Department of Education resources to turn around low-performing schools."

—Presidential Directive, October 1997

Executive Summary

As we approach the 21st century, American public education is rising to meet a new challenge — high expectations and achievement for *all* students in *every* school. States and school districts are raising academic standards and making efforts to align curriculum, assessments, teacher training, and instruction with these challenging standards. The U.S. Department of Education is supporting these efforts with programs and resources to help improve teaching and learning in schools across the nation.

Expecting more from schools and students demands that state and district leaders face the important task of improving low-performing schools. In some of our schools, student achievement is dismal. Data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress show that the academic performance of students in our nation's highest-poverty schools is often several grade levels behind that of students in low-poverty schools. In low-performing schools, teachers sometimes have low expectations of students and feel that they can do little to improve student performance. Often the environment is not conducive to learning — teachers are burnt out, school safety is a problem, and students and the community are disengaged. Many low-performing schools are located in impoverished communities where family distress, crime, and violence are prevalent. Limited financial, human, and program resources can leave these schools without the support they need to deliver high-quality instruction.

Fixing Low-Performing Schools: Pathways to Progress

- ✔Set high expectations for students.
- ✔Hold schools accountable for performance.
- ✔Provide a safe learning environment.
- ✔Create leaders at school and district levels.
- ✔Let leaders lead.
- ✔Recruit and retain the best teachers.
- ✔Train teachers in instruction and curriculum.
- ✔Support students with extra help and time.
- ✔Involve the community in schooling.
- ✔Create smaller schools.
- ✔Close or reconstitute bad schools.

-Adapted from *Education Week*, January 8, 1998

Turning around low-performing schools is not easy. It involves making strategic decisions about instructional practices and focusing all school staff on aligning every aspect of school operations, from professional development to parent and community involvement, in order to support and sustain efforts to improve student achievement.

Low-performing schools rarely have the capacity to make these kinds of changes on their own. While much of what it takes to turn around a low-performing school can occur only within the school itself and with the cooperation and commitment of school staff, states and school districts must provide the critical impetus and support for the process of change.

By setting high academic standards, holding all schools accountable for performance, and identifying schools that do not meet those standards, states and districts are taking

important steps to raise expectations for all students. For schools that do not meet expectations, states and districts can do much to provide the support necessary to help them focus on improving teaching and learning. In schools where student achievement remains persistently low, many states and districts are actively intervening with resources and technical assistance to further the school improvement process. This guide describes some of the strategies that states and districts are pursuing to help turn around low-performing schools. It also suggests concrete actions that state, district, and school leaders, as well as parents and community members, can take. The guide concludes with an inventory of federal resources that can support efforts to turn around low-performing schools.

Raising the Stakes: Setting High Standards for Performance

Across the nation, states and districts are raising the stakes by establishing procedures and standards to define expectations for students, identify poor performance, and hold schools accountable for student achievement. Texas, for example, annually collects achievement data from the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills on its more than 3.7 million students. The state uses this data to measure not only progress at the school level but academic performance by racial/ethnic and income categories. For a school to be rated "acceptable" in Texas, at least 40 percent of all students in each racial and economic category must pass each section of the assessment. In addition, schools must maintain an attendance rate of at least 94 percent, and a dropout rate of no more than 6 percent. The data on each school is made available to the public and performance standards increase over time. In Texas, and in many other states and districts across the nation, schools that do not meet standards of performance are subject to sanctions or state and local intervention.

States and districts also are sending strong signals to students about their own accountability for academic performance. Chicago, for example, has committed to eliminating social promotion — the automatic passing of students from grade to grade regardless of whether they have mastered necessary skills. Districtwide, students who perform below minimum standards at key grades are required to participate in a seven-week summer school program.

Holding schools and students more accountable for performance is forcing states and districts to face the issue of low-performing schools head-on. Once these schools have been identified, how can states and districts help them do what it takes to improve student achievement?

Focus on Learning: Promising Strategies for Improving Student Achievement

The bottom line is for low-performing schools to make changes that will allow them to deliver high-quality curriculum and instruction so that all children reach challenging academic standards. This may seem straightforward, but it is not easy — for any school. Effective

schools are places where there is a coherent program for teaching and learning and where all key elements in the school are aligned with that focus. In the case of low-performing schools, states and districts can provide assistance by:

- **Helping schools gain control of the learning environment.** This is a prerequisite to focusing on learning. Schools cannot effectively implement instructional changes if they do not first address student discipline, safety, and high absenteeism. Districts can help school leaders by instituting a "zero tolerance" policy for violence and drugs and by consistently and fairly enforcing such policies. School uniforms and effective classroom management strategies also can help create an environment conducive to learning. Gaining control of the school environment means more than just implementing get-tough discipline policies; it also involves showing respect for students and giving them responsibilities, as members of the school community, for maintaining a safe environment for learning.

- **Concentrating resources and efforts on providing students with challenging curriculum and high-quality instruction.** If students are to be held accountable for reaching high standards of performance, then they must be offered the kinds of curriculum and instruction that will help them meet that challenge. Districts must demand that all schools offer challenging coursework to all students. To help ensure that every student reaches high standards, states and districts can use resources to increase instructional time, extend the school day or the school year, and offer after-school assistance to students who need it.

- **Providing services so that young children come to school ready to learn.** A child's early environment is critical to intellectual development and school success. In recognition of this fact, states and school districts can help ensure that more children benefit from early childhood services. In addition to providing pre-kindergarten for children, many local education agencies are partnering with community organizations to implement family literacy programs, such as Even Start, that support early childhood education, school readiness, and parent involvement in learning activities.

- **Creating a professional development program aligned with the content of curriculum and focused on improving instruction.** Professional development is an often neglected element of the academic program in low-performing schools. To be effective, professional development activities must center on the classroom. Community School District #2 in New York City, for example, concentrates its professional development resources and time on engaging teachers in learning about the materials they teach and skills they need to improve classroom instruction. The district works to identify teachers that need assistance and helps to counsel teachers out of the profession if they do not improve.

- **Helping schools implement comprehensive school reform programs**. Creating coherent educational programs in low-performing schools usually requires changes in

all aspects of a school, including its curriculum and academic standards, school governance, community-school relationships, staff development, technology, parent involvement, and services to meet children's needs. For this reason, Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act emphasizes the need for schoolwide programs in high-poverty, low-performing schools. There are a number of research-based models and designs available to help schools address these multiple aspects of school effectiveness, and many provide technical assistance to help schools implement the designs. Districts such as San Antonio, Memphis, and Cincinnati are implementing a number of these models in a large proportion of their schools.

Building School Capacity: Systemic Support for the Process of Change

Research tells us that high-performing schools align curriculum, classroom practices, and professional development with high academic standards for all students. These schools also build a sense of teamwork among staff, work in partnership with parents and the community, and use performance data to inform choices and create a cycle of continuous improvement.

District support for these practices is key for building the capacity of schools to improve student achievement. Yet, low-performing schools are sometimes embedded in troubled school systems that cannot support the school improvement process. Individual school efforts can be thwarted by districts that fail to provide leadership and that lack the focus and long-term commitment necessary for turning around low-performing schools.

Therefore, part of the process of building the capacity of low-performing schools involves setting priorities on the district level, such as:

- **Ensuring strong leadership at the school**. Districts must recruit principals who will serve as instructional leaders.

- **Promoting policies that encourage teacher commitment to reform**. Districts should hire teachers enthusiastic about change and willing to work in low-performing schools. Districts also can be flexible, allowing teachers the chance to leave a school if they do not want to participate in the school reform process. Teacher and staff commitment to improving schools can be fostered by efforts to create smaller schools, which generally have better communication and collaboration among staff — two ingredients that are essential for creating a shared purpose and collective responsibility for school improvement.

- **Using resources strategically**. Schools must make tough choices about the ways they allocate their resources if they are to focus on improving teaching and learning. Low-performing schools and school districts often have multiple competing priorities. While districts and schools may implement separate programs intended to address

specific needs, the programs can be unfocused, disjointed, or work at cross-purposes. Pieced together, these multiple efforts often do not add up to a coherent whole. Districts must help schools coordinate and concentrate their resources on classroom instruction.

Districts also can do much to streamline their administrative operations and help redirect resources into the classroom. For example, part of Philadelphia's education reform plan "Children Achieving" involves implementing cost-cutting administrative reforms. Over the past two years, Philadelphia has been able to save more than $29 million. To the extent that such resources can be targeted toward low-performing schools that work to develop coherent school improvement plans, streamlining district budgets can boost low-performing schools and help raise public and community confidence in local public school systems.

- **Helping schools use performance data to drive improvement.** Using data is important for identifying patterns of failure, diagnosing problems, and matching concrete solutions to educational needs. States such as Maryland and districts such as Minneapolis are disaggregating test scores to help identify causes for low performance, develop appropriate improvement strategies, and monitor progress as a strategy for continuous improvement.

- **Working in partnership with the community.** Schools cannot do their jobs alone. Low-performing schools, in particular, need the assistance of community stakeholders to raise student performance. Parent involvement is essential. Local businesses, colleges, and universities are invaluable sources of support. Teacher unions can be cooperative allies in the process of change if they are invited to work in partnership to improve low-performing schools.

- **Providing incentives for change and support for innovation.** Districts can help support school-level change by following the lessons of high-performance organizations. In many states, local educators, parents, community members, and school board members can create public charter schools that operate under performance contracts that provide greater autonomy along with accountability for results. Public school choice and open enrollment policies also can provide incentives for school improvement. Boston, for instance, allows parents to choose from an array of neighborhood schools, magnet schools, and public charter schools. Districts also can provide incentives for school improvement by rewarding success. Charlotte-Mecklenburg's Benchmark Goals program, for example, gives cash awards to teachers whose students meet a range of goals that reflect improvements over previous performance.

Intervening in Chronically Low-Performing Schools

Because low-performing schools often have little capacity to make major reforms demanded by accountability policies, many states and districts are providing systemwide support for school improvement. Twenty-three states have policies for intervening and mandating major changes in chronically low-performing schools — from helping "redesign" schools to, as a last resort, reconstituting failing schools.

In many cases, intervention has been a collaborative experience. For example, New York State has developed a process to help redesign low-performing schools. Teams of teachers, board of education members, union representatives, parents, and curriculum experts led by district superintendents conduct four-day visits to low-performing schools to examine all aspects of school operations. Based on the recommendations of review teams, schools and districts develop corrective action plans. In New York City, the process includes assigning low-performing schools to the "Chancellor's District." A school assigned to the special district receives extra resources and technical assistance until the district determines that the school has the capacity and commitment to support its redesign plan.

Districts such as Chicago and San Francisco have employed reconstitution measures in attempting to turn around chronically low-performing schools. While the strategy encompasses a number of practices, it generally represents the extreme along a continuum of intervention strategies. In its basic form, reconstitution involves closing a school and reopening it with new school leaders and usually with new teachers and staff. Reconstitution policies are controversial and there is no conclusive data about whether reconstitution is an effective strategy for school improvement. Some believe that the threat of reconstitution has been an important force for leveraging change in chronically low-performing schools. Opponents believe reconstitution policies unfairly place the blame for poor student achievement on teachers and damage fledgling school communities.

Regardless of the individual policy, state and district intervention in low-performing schools cannot succeed without the cooperation and commitment of those who actually work in the school. Turning around low-performing schools is difficult work. It requires high expectations, a focus on learning, a commitment to students, strong leadership, trust among school staff, and collective responsibility for student achievement. States and districts cannot dictate that schools have these characteristics, but they do have a critical leadership role in setting the context for change and raising the capacity of schools to acquire these attributes.

U.S. Department of Education Support

President Clinton and the U.S. Department of Education are committed to providing the support needed to help turn around low-performing schools. For example, beginning in July 1998, the Department will provide $145 million for states to award to districts and schools working to implement high-quality, research-based comprehensive school reform

programs. Along with **Title I** of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and **Goals 2000**, this **Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Program** will present an opportunity for districts to target their lowest-performing schools for schoolwide improvement models.

President Clinton has also proposed several initiatives to help increase student achievement, particularly in high-poverty schools, including:

- **Educational Opportunity Zones** to help high-poverty urban and rural districts implement some of the kinds of policies highlighted in this guide that support school accountability and improvements in student performance;

- **Reducing class size** to a national average of 18 students per class in the early grades, a policy that research shows would especially benefit students in high-poverty schools;

- **America Reads Challenge**, an initiative that encourages school and community partnerships to provide quality reading instruction through linking in-school and out-of-school reading programs. The goal is to ensure that all children learn to read well and independently by the end of third grade;

- **21st Century Community Learning Centers** to fund school-community partnerships to build or expand after-school, extended learning programs for school-age children; and

- **School Construction Initiative** to help modernize school buildings through interest-free bonds to support a high-quality teaching and learning environment and to alleviate classroom overcrowding.

As we face a new century, it is time for America to renew its commitment to future generations. There is a role for each and every member of the school community in raising our expectations for all students, providing a safe learning environment, aligning educational resources and instruction with high academic standards, and choosing long-term improvement strategies. This guide provides examples of promising state, district, and school practices for helping children to learn, and suggests concrete steps that state and local policy makers, school leaders, parents, and community stakeholders can take to fix low-performing schools. Through these efforts, we can work together to make all schools places where students strive toward high levels of learning and achievement.

Checklist for Improvement

The following suggestions, based on research and the experiences of successful turnaround schools, are relevant for various partners working together to ensure that all students attend high-performing schools:

Suggestions for State and Local Leaders

1. **Give school officials sufficient authority to act quickly, decisively, and creatively to improve schools—and then hold them accountable for results.**

2. **Support schools that are working to fundamentally change and improve.** Consider instituting a reward system for schools that improve performance. Give them extra resources, support, recognition, and assistance whenever possible.

3. **Take extra steps to recruit, support, reward, and train outstanding principals and teachers and send them to schools in difficulty.** Use experienced, recognized teachers as mentors to beginning teachers.

4. **Provide quick but fair ways to take bold action to address chronically troubled schools**. Provide concrete means to convert a school to a new design, reconstitute it, or start it over as a charter school.

5. **Establish a state or districtwide data collection system that allows the evaluation of student and school progress across a set of expected standards of performance.**

6. **Evaluate student performance to make sure that *all* students are making progress** toward high standards of excellence and are given opportunities to succeed. Then end social promotion. At the same time, recognize that school transformation is a steady process and results do not always appear immediately.

7. **Give parents the opportunity to choose among public schools and choose the full set of core courses needed for their children to prepare for college and careers.**

8. **Consider creating a more personalized education setting in high schools by establishing smaller units**, such as grade-level or across-grade "families," several charter schools, schools within a school, or career academies.

9. **Ensure that no student or group of students is left out of improvement efforts.** Disadvantaged students need extra attention to make sure they are receiving the same opportunities as other children. This requires focused, high-quality instruction during the regular school day and extra help and time after school and during the summer.

10. **Work with employers, teachers, principals, and religious and community groups to encourage greater family and community involvement** in the school, after school, in the community, and at home.

11. **If a principal is slow to get the message, find strength in a new leader with experience in similar schools.**

12. **If teachers are burned out or not engaged in the needed improvements, counsel them to improve or leave the profession**. Create mechanisms to allow those who do not agree with the reform to leave.

Suggestions for School Leaders — Principals, Lead Teachers, and Parent Leaders

1. **Create an orderly, disciplined environment.** Students will do well and teachers will improve their teaching if they are in a safe, supportive culture of learning with firm, fair rules of discipline.

2. **Recruit and hire the best teachers and principals**. Provide high-quality professional development to keep them at your school and continuously improve their knowledge and skills.

3. **Be open to fundamental change.** Build a team to put a relentless focus on improving instruction and achieving high academic standards. Go the extra mile—school leaders set the tone for the whole school.

4. **Identify needs based on achievement results and group input.** Analyze student achievement results at the student and classroom level. Examine the school's budget, looking for what percent is dedicated to improving teaching and learning in the classroom.

5. **Search out and visit research-based designs as a guide to choosing reforms.** Send teachers to conferences, training, and other schools to consider proven designs. Successful designs or models have been used in schools across the country. A number of these designs can be adapted to your school's needs. The whole school community should agree on the design for your school.

6. **Work with top district administrators and staff as well as teachers, parents, and school staff to set concrete goals tied to high standards for student and school achievement.** Choose an improvement strategy that targets the student needs revealed by your data analysis. Make the goals real by continuously monitoring progress toward them. If progress is slow or nonexistent, reassess what needs to improve in the school and make the necessary changes.

7. **Concentrate professional development on improving teaching.** Focus professional development on enhancing teachers' knowledge of their subject matter and their skills for engaging students in learning. Allow teachers to identify professional development needs for the school, and include time for professional development in the regular school schedule; staff development is not an extra-curricular activity.

8. **Reach out to parents and family members.** Listen to parents' concerns to find out what worries them most for their children. Train teachers and other school staff to work with families. Use new technologies—voice mail systems, homework hot lines, and the Internet—to link parents to the classroom. Make special accommodations to

reach parents whose first language is not English. Call 1-800-USA-LEARN for a copy of *New Skills for New Schools*, a text on how to help teachers involve families in children's learning.

9. **Include all staff in the process of change; create a team.** School improvements will work only if teachers commit to fundamental change. Everyone—including administrative, custodial, and lunch staff—can help create a positive learning environment. Call a meeting of teachers, administrators, staff, parents, and other partners to establish a focus for improvement.

10. **Make collaborative planning time available.** Incorporate into the regular schedule time for teachers to plan, discuss, and set goals together.

11. **Plan instructional time to meet student needs.** Many schools have increased family support and education by offering safe havens for students before and after school, providing learning and enrichment programs for children that build on their regular school program, offering course work and social activities for adults in the evenings and on weekends, and instituting block scheduling. Call 1-800-USA-LEARN for a copy of *Keeping Schools Open As Community Learning Centers*.

12. **Develop partnerships with businesses, civic groups, and institutions of higher education.** These connections can provide monetary and material resources, volunteer time, and expertise about school reform and education research.

13. **Reach out for assistance.** Look in the resource directory at the end of this guide for information on resources that can help turn around schools. Contact one of the many experienced organizations that are also listed in this guide. Explore research-based approaches to see if they meet your school's needs. Ask other schools working on reforms nearby for assistance and advice. Bring in a facilitator to help assess your needs and identify academic areas in greatest need of improvement.

14. **Learn about charter schools and school reconstitution.** Invite successful charter school developers to explain how they got organized and started. Visit the website devoted to charter schools, <http://www.uscharterschools.org>. Some schools have to start completely over to have chance at success.

15. **Continuously assess progress toward goals by including evaluation in your school improvement plan**. This will give positive reinforcement to students, staff, and the community by showing how far the school has come. It will also illuminate areas needing greater attention. Continuous evaluation provides an opportunity for everyone to reflect on the change process and make suggestions about ways to refine and improve it. Call 1-800-USA-LEARN for a copy of *A Compact for Learning: An Action Handbook for Family-School-Community Partnerships*.

Suggestions for Families, Businesses, and Community Organizations

1. **Get involved with the school.** Support needed changes and improvements. Make your voice heard. Work with the principal and teachers to make the school the best learning environment for children. If order and discipline need to be instilled, help by reinforcing school rules at home. Volunteer to monitor school halls and playgrounds.

2. **Compare your school with similar schools that are successful**. There is much to learn from a partnership with schools that are being turned around or have an accelerated rate of improvement.

3. **Support your principal and teachers and other staff who are making fundamental changes to turn your school around.** Principals and teachers need encouragement from parents and the community to know they are heading in the right direction.

4. **Encourage schools to help *all* children reach high standards for learning.** If you see that some children are not being challenged, talk to their teachers, the principal, or the district staff. The curriculum, student assessments, teaching, and homework should all be focused on high academic standards.

5. **Instill in children the values they need to progress in school and throughout life.** Work to build good character and citizenship skills to help improve school discipline and student achievement. Many children need extra help, tutoring, and mentoring after school and during the summer. Help start and expand after-school programs to provide a safe environment (e.g., bring in and join other community and youth groups).

6. **Demonstrate that education is important.** If you are a parent, ask to see your child's homework and take an active interest in what he or she is learning at school. If you represent a business, ask to see students' transcripts before you hire them. If you represent a community organization, recognize students who reach high achievement levels and reward teachers and principals who go the extra mile. Develop school-college partnerships to link middle school and high school students with college.

7. **Offer professional development opportunities for teachers through summer internships in businesses that focus on their subject matter.** Technical firms can offer placement in work that hones teachers' math and science knowledge. Businesses and colleges can help with team building and strategic planning.

8. **Become a member of the Partnership for Family Involvement in Education.** Call 1-800-USA-LEARN for a free information packet on how to join 4,000 family, school, community, cultural, and religious organizations and businesses that are committed to increasing family and community involvement in education.